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ABSTRACT

This report asserts that in spite of increases in efforts by universities to recruit and hire women, progress in increasing women's representation among tenured faculty continues to be slow. To increase understanding of the complex factors that influence retention of women faculty, qualitative interviews were conducted with women who voluntarily left their untenured and tenured faculty positions at one research university. Informants included 8 former tenured faculty members and 13 former untenured faculty representing 6 of the colleges and schools at 1 university. Interviews were conducted by telephone, tape recorded, and transcribed for analysis. The reasons informants left university employment were not clear-cut and varied greatly, showing that influences on their decisions were multiple and interconnected. The key reasons cited included these benefits/opportunities that were denied them at the university in question and that may have been offered at a new position: (1) respect shown by colleagues; (2) opportunity for personal growth and contribution; (3) opportunities for promotion; (4) support of resources, including salary; (5) assistance in finding employment for spouses and partners; (6) assistance with dependent care responsibilities; and (7) fit with the institutions values about the kind of research they should conduct. (Contains 27 references.) (SLD)

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FORMER WOMEN FACULTY: Reasons for Leaving One Research University

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Abstract

Despite increases in efforts by universities to recruit and hire women, progress in increasing women's representation among tenured faculty continues to be slow. Yet little has been done to increase our understanding of the complex set of factors that influence retention of women faculty. To help close this gap, we offer the results of a qualitative analysis of interviews with women who voluntarily left their untenured and tenured faculty positions at one research university.

WOMEN FACULTY AND WHY THEY LEFT ONE RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

The motivations for conducting this research on the persistence of women faculty have both global and local origins. We began our inquiry with the belief that previous research suggests a need for greater understanding of the reasons women voluntarily leave tenured and tenure track faculty positions. We began also with an opportunity to assist a specific university where influential administrators hoped to gather information with which they would craft future policy aimed to retain their women faculty. Given these goals, we present findings with scholarly significance and the potential to positively impact a specific university.

Institutional and cohort studies at research universities offer evidence that women seldom reach tenured ranks because they disproportionately are denied tenure and voluntarily leave their faculty positions. Demographic statistics document this condition. Women remain segregated at the assistant professor rank, comprising over 32% of assistant professors between 1979 and 1992. In research universities women make up only 13.8% of full professors. A 1998 AAUP Committee Report found that "....although the proportion of tenured faculty who are women has grown from 18 to 20

percent, the proportion of female non-tenure-track faculty has grown even more, from 34 to 35 percent. The increasing entry of women into the profession has so far exceeded the improvement in the positions women attain that the proportion of all female faculty who are tenured has actually declined from 24 to 20 percent." (Benjamin, 1998)

Among evidence that tenure is awarded disproportionately to men compared to women faculty, one institutional study found that women assistant professors received tenure less often than did male assistant professors. Departments also awarded the associate professor rank less often to women initially hired as instructors than to men initially hired as instructors. Women of color were even less likely to be awarded tenure than other faculty (Hollenshead, 1994). In another study of a cohort of untenured faculty appointed between 1973 and 1982 (Feldt, 1985), departments promoted productive women proportionately less than male peers. In a larger cohort group from this same time frame, Feldt (1990) documented that significant numbers of untenured women departed and were terminated despite their potential and their success in publishing. Other studies showed that women faculty received tenure at lower rates than male peers (e.g., Rausch, Ortiz, Douthitt, and Reed, 1989).

The focus of our investigation is why women faculty voluntarily leave their tenured and tenure track positions. Studies find that women faculty are more likely than male peers to voluntarily leave tenure track positions in higher education institutions. For example, one study found women were more likely to transfer out of the tenure track and into research scientist positions than were men (Feldt, 1985). A study at another research university found the percentage of women voluntarily exiting double that for men (Rausch, Ortiz, Douthitt, and Reed, 1989).

The reasons women faculty are voluntarily leaving are many and complex. The research literature offers a number of good studies on women still in academia, current and former women faculty, and general faculty mobility that suggest possible reasons. For example, see research by Aisenberg and Harrington (1988); Amey (1993); Boice (1992); Burke (1987); Jensen (1982); Johnsrud and Wunsch (1991); Rausch, Ortiz,

Douthitt, and Reed (1989); Rothblum (1988); Ruskus, Williamson, and Kelley (1993); Sorcinelli (1993); and Weiler (1985).

As we designed our inquiry we examined these studies. Yet these studies do not specifically address the complexities of why women voluntarily leave full-time tenured or tenure track faculty positions. In this study, we examine the issues former women faculty name as influential in their decisions to voluntarily leave their positions at one research university, which we will refer to as X University (XU).

It is important for universities to have a better understanding of these reasons. For example, in order to promote a more diverse faculty, some campuses institute programs aimed at hiring more tenured women faculty. For a campus to utilize these kinds of initiatives, they need to understand why a tenured woman would want to leave her current academic position. A campus that does not wish to lose its tenured women faculty to other schools would need to know what provokes or entices tenured women faculty to leave and then develop a plan to counter these factors. In addition, tenured and tenure track women faculty in research institutions are relatively rare, especially in certain fields, and scattered across departments and colleges. Studies of this group can perhaps serve as a conduit by which women faculty can share their understanding of the issues that concern them and assist each other as they deal with their environment as individuals and collectively.

METHODOLOGY

Ideas driving the research design.

We undertook this study with a goal to answer the question: 'Why would tenured women faculty leave their position at a university?' We know that women leave an academic institution for a variety of reasons--some appropriate and positive, some unnecessary and damaging to the individual and to the environment of the university.

In approaching the study, we took the perspective that women's career attainment cannot be fully understood by looking at their individual traits (i.e., whether personality or early socialization). We agree with numerous scholars who focus on a more sociological explanation of the experiences of women in the work place (e.g., Acker, 1988; Harding, 1992; Kanter, 1977). We began this study with the expectation that many of the reasons women faculty leave positions are due to the environment of the workplace and thus within the control of leaders in universities. We want our research to facilitate institutional change. The words of our informants serve as the most convincing means to illustrate our findings.

Because of our belief in the 'strong objectivity of women's standpoint' (Harding, 1993; Nielson, 1994), we go to those who can best tell us why faculty women would leave--faculty women who left. With this study we have sought to describe their perspectives. Our informants see aspects of their work environment that their male peers do not see.

Based on our goals for our research, we chose interview women who voluntarily[1] left faculty positions at one research university. Some of our informants went to other academic positions, others to research agencies or private industry. We used exit interviews with open-ended questions. We also asked focused probes concerning the factors that we suspected to be influential--namely forces within the university work environment like collegial interactions. We approached our analysis

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[1] This study reports the experience of women who 'voluntarily' left their faculty positions. For the tenured faculty, 'voluntarily' describes very clearly their situation--they were in positions where their appointment was secure and long-term if they wanted it. For the untenured faculty, 'voluntary' does technically describe how they left--they resigned. They were not told to leave or fired or denied tenure. Yet some of our untenured informants relayed to us their concerns that they would be denied tenure if they stayed and that their decision to leave was affected by this. Still we stress that the views of our departed untenured informants must not be dismissed as 'complaints' of those who were not 'measuring up.' First, only three of our informants told us that they were actually told they would be denied tenure. Second, whether our informants 'measured up' by the standards of their units is immaterial to this study. All had valuable information to share about the environments within which they worked which may have either facilitated or hindered their productivity and satisfaction. Finally, we want to stress that our informants, though they talked primarily about the 'pushes' to leave X University, were 'pulled' and recruited by the institutions to which they moved. This was unquestionably shown in the case of our tenured informants, but also with our untenured informants.

with an inductive perspective and allowed the issues important to the faculty to emerge out of the data, rather than impose any theory of what ideas would emerge.

While some higher education leaders and faculty call for the use of exit interviews (e.g., Vandell and Fishbein, 1989), skeptics think that exit interviews with faculty fail to solicit complete and accurate information. One faculty member (not an interview informant in our study) with whom we spoke, wary of the use of exit interviews, explained that former faculty do not want to burn bridges and upset their former department peers by saying anything negative about their experience. Because faculty who leave a university often remain in the same profession, they need to continue to work with former colleagues who serve on review boards and committees that may be able to assist them in the future. With this understanding, we designed our exit interviews to minimize the risk to the participants and at the same time to provide information that can inform institutional change. To minimize risk to informants, interviews were conducted and informant identities known to only the interviewer who has no connections to the academic units, university administration or professional communities in which the informants work.

Our informants and how we learned from them.

The informants for this study include former full-time X University women--tenured and tenure-track faculty who left their positions voluntarily during the past few years. Key administrators at all XU schools and colleges provided us with the names of women faculty who voluntarily resigned during the 1992/93 and 1993/94 academic years. We attempted to contact all of the women to whom we were referred though some were unreachable during the period (October, 1993 to August, 1994) in which we conducted the study. All former faculty members contacted, with the exception of one former tenured professor, agreed to be interviewed for this study (or in the case of two informants, take a survey modeled on the interview). The informants who provided us with the insights that we share in this report include 8

former tenured faculty, and 13 former untenured faculty representing six of the colleges and schools at the University[2]

For the former tenured faculty: Their stay at X University varied from 5 to 25 years and averaged around 13 years. One of our informants is a woman of color; the others are Caucasian. Four indicated that they were married during their career at X University. Two mentioned having children and 2 said they were single.[3] All of the informants are currently employed at prestigious universities (5) or top research institutions outside academe (3). The former associate professors are now professors.

For the former untenured faculty: The shortest time these informants spent at XU was one year. X University had hired most of our informants as assistant professors. Since they have left X University, these informants work in a number of settings. Of those who continue full-time in academe, four are in tenure-track assistant professorships, one is an associate professor, one is a full professor. One has taken a deanship. Three of our informants have moved into adjunct or part-time faculty positions which they combine with other commitments. One has adjunct positions at two institutions. Another combines her part-time position with being self-employed. Another combines her adjunct position with raising her children. The remaining four informants work full-time within their field for non-academic institutions.

Interviews were conducted by telephone, tape recorded (with the permission of participants), and transcribed. In the semi-structured interviews, the interviewer asked the participants why they left their positions. Participants explained their reasons and the interviewer probed to clarify their comments. The interviewer then explored specific reasons for departures, drawn from findings of past studies (Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988; Amey, 1993; Brown, 1967; Burke, 1987; Rothblum, 1988; Stecklein and Lathrop, 1960; Weiler, 1985). These included the availability of

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[2] Throughout this report, we have changed some of the specifics of the stories of our informants to protect their identities. Confidentiality also limits how we describe them in other than broad terms.

[3] We did not ask our informants directly about their family/marital status.

resources, salary, opportunity for advancement, workload, interactions with colleagues, discrimination and family issues. Informants were also asked what their former university could have done differently to retain them.

To analyze the information provided to us, we paid careful attention to both the audio taped interviews and their transcriptions. One of us conducted all of the interviews and listened to the audio tapes numerous times. Both authors independently reviewed transcripts. In our analysis we identified key issues mentioned by our informants. In addition, we revisited our analysis, attending specifically to the urgings of feminist scholars like Devault (1990) who caution that language often does not neatly describe women's experiences. With this in mind we looked and listened for where our informants expressed themselves ambiguously and looked for the messages between the lines.

Our interviews were social interactions between people, not just 'subjects' who supplied us with data and 'researchers' who collected the data. Oakley (1981) emphasizes the need to recognize this and comment on this as part of research findings. While we did not directly ask the women with whom we spoke how they felt about participating in the interviews, our sense is that the comfort level in talking about their experiences varied. A couple of the informants stated that they were not really concerned with concealing their identities and used names of their former colleagues and discipline specific research areas in their conversation. Others were more guarded. Some asked specifically if we were sure their identities would not be shared with former administrators for whom they worked. They tended to not use names of people or discipline-specific jargon. We did not pursue topics at length if we sensed informants did not want to elaborate. In fact, two interviews were very short due to the discomfort that the interviewer perceived in the voices of the informants who kept their comments very brief. One informant told us

> I think that one thing that you might need to recognize is that, I'm sure you do recognize it, is that for most people that you're interviewing in this position--it's very difficult to talk about. It's, you know, something that probably most people in this situation invested in it, you know, considerable time, energy and, you know, whatever,

and to... And for whatever reason they end up leaving. It is probably somewhat painful.

After interviewing each informant, our main feeling was that of gratitude for their candid comments. We were also impressed by their commitment to their field and to higher education. Some of the informants asked: how we planned to use the study findings, what initiated the study, for the current situation at X University. A number of them offered to help out with future research if we planned to pursue certain questions of interest to them.

This study benefits from the collected insights of 21 talented and very different former XU faculty. The characteristics and circumstances of each of our informants are unique and complex. Yet many shared common experiences and feelings pertaining to their decisions to leave X University. We look at common themes found in a number of their stories. We aim to identify, in their complexity, issues that former XU women faculty find important enough to influence them to leave.

FINDINGS: ISSUES CRITICAL TO FORMER X UNIVERSITY FACULTY

The reasons our informants left X University are not clear-cut and singular. Rather, the influences on their decisions are multiple and interconnected. The key reasons they cite for leaving include their needs for the following benefits that were denied to them at X University and/or offered by their new employer:

- Respect shown to them by colleagues
- Opportunity for personal growth and contribution
- Opportunities for promotion
- Support of resources, including salary
- Assistance with finding employment for spouses/partners
- Assistance with their responsibilities to care for dependents
- Fit with their institution's values of what type of research they should conduct

To truly understand what our informants have shared with us requires a much fuller description of the issues they name as influential on their decisions to voluntarily leave their positions at X University. We attempt to provide this in the pages that follow by including a cross-section of comments by our informants to illustrate some of their most pressing concerns while also recognizing the diversity of their views.

Respect

Though the influences on our informants are complex and many, we find that the issue of respect is especially important to them. Many of these former faculty talk, with great emotion, about respect or, too often, lack of respect. They often struggle to describe this issue, grappling for words that can convey the nebulous feelings they have in terms of how they are treated. We believe that they would not take on the difficult task of verbalizing this need for respect were it not an issue that was critically important to them. We therefore choose to address this issue first.

Our informants talked a great deal about 'respect'--how they perceived that their colleagues felt about them. They talked about how they were 'treated' in general terms that suggest the embodiment of respect or lack of respect. Some informants also talked about 'climate' which enlarges the discussion to include how the University or their unit respected and treated faculty in general or women faculty in particular. In analyzing this study, we note that some informants talk about their decision to leave and their experiences at the XU in terms of all three constructs (respect, treatment, and climate), while others find one concept more descriptive of their experiences. As we interpret the findings, we find these terms describing basically the same issue: Were they (and other women faculty) taken seriously as individuals and scholars?

For a number of our informants their answer was 'no', they were not taken seriously. This significantly influenced four of the tenured women and four of the untenured women we interviewed in their decision to leave X University. One tenured informant repeatedly said that her department chairperson "did not take her seriously" and illustrated this through various examples. Another tenured faculty member expressed her frustration as follows:

> I think it is very clear why women like myself have left. I devoted my whole life. I can say I gave the best years of my life to a university who threw them back at me--who didn't really care. I think that that is a very damning thing to say about a place. I think X University had been noted as a very cold place.
>
> ... But in the end, I think that maybe it gets so caught up in all kinds of extraneous things that it has to do, that it really can't pay attention to its own people.

One of our untenured informants talked about an inappropriate lack of respect for her scholarship when we asked her about why she left the University. She notes her work was viewed with

> very strong disregard. It was very bizarre to go to the department research meeting and being told there my work was horrible, it had no validity, it had no value. .... I used to go to national meetings to get support for my work. There was no measuring yardstick or valuable reliable yardstick within my department. They told me that my work was all a pile of junk. But I could go to people whose opinion I certainly valued a whole lot more, who were the cream of the crop, lecturers and researchers within my field of specialty. They gave me kudos. And that is how I survived in academics.

Several informants spoke of running into pockets or neighborhoods of a resistant and hostile climate. This climate was difficult for all faculty, men included. Yet it was especially tough for women or as one informant puts it there was "a little extra twist that has to do with gender." One tenured informant had a very interesting comment on her view of 'discrimination.' She did not feel that she could attribute certain actions towards her as discriminatory. Yet the type of incidents she described are often cited as examples of such discrimination.

> No, I wouldn't say that I would ..call anything terribly discriminatory to me personally. I think that some of the issues--of not being able to advance along, and be in the old boys network kind of thing, or sometimes being embarrassed by unreasonable criticisms that were made in meetings and so on--I would not take them as personally, as personal issues. I would just think that there are some individuals at X University that are just not very sensitive toward anyone. And if you happened to be in their way at a certain time, then you're going to be the one who takes the insensitivity. No one is interested in hearing about this and making a correction so it becomes a repetitive cycle. Some younger staff members will then come and complain and be very bitter by their experiences. And you just say 'well that's how it is.'

Our untenured informants were more inclined to talk with us about how they were 'treated' rather than in terms of climate. Many talked about how their gender played a role in their treatment. Their stories ranged from those who felt there was not differential treatment due to gender and race to those who gave examples of blatant and appalling experiences. Most informants explained that they witnessed some less than respectful treatment--though not all cited this as a decision to leave. One informant told us how she had "never encountered anything" but fair treatment at X University. On the other end of the spectrum of views among our untenured informants, another informant saw much discrimination at the XU and left because of it.

> But my time at XU as a women faculty was so horrid that I was either going to leave or just outright quit. A better offer came along before I had to say, 'Forget this! I will be a house wife.' The amount of sexual bias was unbelievable! The things that I went through. I had a chance to discuss some of the episodes with the women here at the university I now work at. They had a big forum for professional women and careers and development. The women here could not believe what went on at different places and what I actually put up with at X University. Where can we start. There are all sorts of things.

Opportunity for personal growth and contribution

Opportunity was an especially striking concern with tenured faculty while a related issue, promotion, was more critical to those who were untenured. Six of our tenured informants expressed frustration in being denied opportunity, the chance to contribute--in their service to the university community and through their research. This was a major reason for leaving for three informants. One informant noted

> that perhaps is the saddest thing for us, the women who do leave, is if we believe that we haven't really made the difference we hoped we would make

Another tenured informant elaborated on what she meant when she said she found opportunities lacking at X University and why she left for her new position.

> I think that one looks for an advancement in one's career under any circumstances, but especially when one has the feeling of not being able to make any significant advancements or experience growth in the institution where they are. .... as time went on, I noticed that I was really not asked to do very much committee work. I was not encouraged to sit on study sections. And when I inquired about some of these issues there were no answers provided. So I really felt that I would not be able

> to either learn new skills, developing farther than where I was. As a matter of fact I was not really even encouraged or promoted to have some participation which I felt would be appropriate for my level of experience, and expertise. And I think that the women at X University at my school are in general experiencing the same kinds of things women experience in academia everywhere. And there is the same lack of encouragement of further growth, lack of opportunities for participation, advancement, of real meaningful contributions ...

Promotion

Promotion is the recognition of one's work through the tangible reward of moving from untenured to tenured professor, from associate to full professor or to higher administrative posts. Issues related to promotion to tenure were a primary cause for leaving for a number of our untenured informants. Some perceived that they would not have been supported for tenure. Some of our informants believed that the reasons they would not be supported were inappropriate. A number noted that being a woman had impact upon their chances for tenure. One notes

> ... one chairmen told me that if ... I went up for tenure ... that there was no way I would make tenure. That they wouldn't recommend me. That the department wouldn't stand behind me and recommend me. Because, of course, when a husband and wife work together and collaborate, that, of course, the husband does all of the work and the wife's name is just on the papers as a 'carry along.'

Others concluded based on what they saw happen to colleagues and what they saw was valued by the university and their unit, that their chances for achieving tenure were not good. The type of research and other scholarship they did was not valued and, therefore, would not support their bid for tenure. One woman notes that there were strong signals that scholars in her field within her school would not be supported in getting tenure. She saw excellent scholars in her specialty denied tenure. Another untenured informant noted that due to a lack of leadership in her unit and its standing within the University, she was left at a disadvantage as she sought tenure.

Untenured women were not alone when they told us that lack of promotional opportunities caused them to leave the XU. A number of our tenured informants described accounts of their own delayed or denied promotion or told of inequitable standards for promotion between women and men. This was a partial contributor to

decisions to leave for two tenured informants. One professor left after being told that she had no opportunity for advancement to a senior administrative post due to her supposedly 'abrasive' manner. Having obtained a reputation as an activist for women, she attributed her lack of opportunity to the fact that

> ... no one wants to hear the truth about things that are going on. ... In my opinion, the few women who I knew of--even outside of my immediate colleagues in my school--who were very good at what they did, obtained training for management positions and were never utilized in those positions in the University. And so they left.

Other tenured and untenured informants echoed her concern that women faculty as a group were ready for, but were denied, the promotions to leadership roles they sought within the University.

Support and resources

Personal support. Our informants talked about 'support' in terms of materials and funding, salary, work space and laboratories, information and advice, and quality colleagues with whom to collaborate. One informant talked about 'support' in terms of what is sometime thought of as personal support.

> I think over the years I had been unhappy with the support that I had gotten while I was on faculty there. For the amount of work that I did, it seems the support just wasn't there. But that was not the real reason. The final reason had to do with an incident that occurred within my unit, in which I got absolutely no support. This was investigated by the University who did not really do anything about it.

As horrible as the incident she described was, she talked more about the reaction to this event by her peers and unit chairperson. After she reported the incident, she notes

> My chairperson tried to talk me into not reporting it and it was already too late. So then he tried to talk me into changing my story and he tried to talk the other female witnesses into changing their stories. And after that ensued a whole bunch of harassment from him and the male members of our department ...
>
> ...I basically told my chairperson when I went to leave .. that I did not really feel that I could work with that group of people who were so prejudiced against women.

Material and financial support. The lack of material and financial support for research were reasons for leaving given by two tenured faculty informants. Another found that the University expected faculty to do too much administrative work and was "providing less staff support" with which to do this. Though not noting these as key in their decision to leave, other informants spoke of their views on financial support and resources after we directly asked them about this in the interview. Some found X University's and their unit's resource and financial support very generous. Another tenured informant found resource support initially good, but then diminishing. She found this connected with her more pressing concern that she lacked opportunities.

Quality of colleagues. Another aspect of support is the quality of colleagues available for collaboration. For two of our untenured informants this was a critical factor in their decision to leave the XU. Their units on campus were not providing them with the colleagues with whom they counted on working when they took their XU positions. One woman noted

> I think the bigger picture in my mind is an issue for everybody in my former department. I think that the ... leadership of the department and to some extent the whole school has changed quite significantly since I came here. .... So that not only directly affects my life, but it directly affected a lot of other people's lives as well. As a result, many of the people I came here to work with are now gone. And many of them left for the same reasons that I'm telling you. So to some extent it's a snowball effect, because I think if all those other people hadn't left I would be much less motivated myself to leave. But given that most of the people that I worked with previously have gone, there is no incentive to keep me here.
>
> ...I'm leaving because I don't think they can bring in the caliber of people that I want to work with.

Information and advice. Information and advice are critical resources named by our untenured informants. Some cited a lack of support to do the kind of work they felt they needed to do to meet expectations and be rewarded. One informant shared a number of her observations on support.

> The reality I believe for me--there was not support to do those different pieces [of my job]. In other words, I was very willing. 'Go over and write a grant.' I don't call that support. Release time. I had the release time--not the problem. But there was not a person there with the experience

> and the track record to help me. Maybe that was my fault that I did not go and pursue somebody. I didn't run all over the campus and make seven connections and then finally at the number tenth find one that worked. Lord knows there are enough resources there.

Good information--available in a timely fashion--was especially key to our untenured informants during their first few years on the faculty. A number of them told us about the advice they wish they had had from colleagues at hiring.

Salary. Salary is often suspected to influence job mobility according to studies of faculty who leave research institutions (Amey, 1993; Burke, 1987; Weiler, 1985). Like these studies, our conversations with former women tenured faculty reveal that while salary inequities were a source of irritation (nine of the informants made negative comments on salary; five found them to be fine), other factors were more important in influencing their decisions to stay or leave. None of our informants said that salary was the primary reason she left X University. However, our informants discussed dissatisfaction with salary in a way that suggests it is a symptom of some of the other problems that resulted in their departure. One former tenured faculty member illustrated how she linked salary with the respect her department denied her in this statement:

> ...I felt that for years I felt very unappreciated by my department. I was paid very poorly.

Salary inequity was recognized by a number of tenured and untenured informants as more inequitable for senior women faculty. Our tenured informants talked about being inequitably paid at X University for many years. A number of them commented on a long history of inequitable pay.

> Yea, you know I could tell you ... there is a real big problem ... A real big problem ... For the nine years I was there, was paid a lower salary in spite of the fact that I was internationally better know than almost anybody in the group. I mean, there are many, many problems there related to women on the faculty.

Our tenured informants relayed a number of stories describing why they found themselves earning less than they felt they should have.

> The salaries. I actually had my unit chair, when I questioned why a male who had been hired at a lower rank than me was making a whole lot more than me... His answer to me--and I swear to you this is the answer--was, 'Well, your husband is a rich professional and you guys don't have any children. And he has many children to support and his wife doesn't work.'

According to the women with whom we spoke one way a tenured faculty member can get a salary increase is to bring in an outside job offer. One informant recounted a very personal example of how outside offers may yield benefits differently for men and for women. When she got an outside offer, she and her husband (also a professor) bargained with their units. Though she got a substantial raise that year, the following year she received a raise far below average because, as a colleague on the executive committee told her, he thought it was unfair to give her such a big raise the year before. She notes

> So basically, I played the boys' game. I got my outside offer. I got my raise out of it and it was immediately taken away from me. My husband meanwhile, who the other university didn't even really want, he got a big raise. He got a new computer. He got... I don't know all of the things. He went straight to his dean and dickered with him. Maybe, he just played the boys' game better than I did. But, on the other hand, I think it is just the system that if you are not a boy then you are not going to be allowed to play the game. That infuriated me! Normally when someone got a tiny raise of that size it's done deliberately to them to tell them that your work stinks. Here I had this incredibly productive year and I get this tiny raise. It was just infuriating. I guess my feeling was, well, it is the usual signal to me from this department which is that they don't give a damn about my work.

A couple of our untenured informants actually noted that their salaries were not critical in their family's budget. Another was pleased with her salary at the XU but was now better paid in industry.

Dual career issues

For six of our informants, both tenured (3) and untenured (3), issues related to their spouse's career contributed significantly to their leaving X University. Four informants found the University was not helpful in assisting their spouses in obtaining adequate opportunities for employment nearby. Three of these women had spouses looking for faculty positions. Untenured informants who named dual career issues as

critical to their leaving all left the XU within four years of their hiring. Two of the informants who left to accommodate their husbands' careers, did so feeling pain and resentment for having to leave units in which they were very happy. Another who left partially due to her husband's career made these comments:

> When they were making an offer to me, they knew that my husband was also in academics. And so they actually treated it like it was going to be a very good thing for them that they might be able to get my husband to X University as well. And as soon as I accepted the offer they did absolutely nothing to try to bring in my husband.

Our informants made some suggestions on how the University could improve in how it had reacted to their need to accommodate a two career family. One informant would have liked to have seen attempts made at introducing her spouse to University faculty in her spouse's field. For example, her husband was an engineer and because she was in another discipline she did not know engineering faculty for him to consult with. Another faculty member wished that the University would consider a spousal assistance program where University funds can be used to augment departmental budgets in order to hire faculty partners of women faculty. Others see timing as a critical factor.

> I think the key was to act sooner. I mean we spent months without hearing anything or knowing if things were being talked about or done or . . . I think if my husband had received an offer early on from X University, saying, 'We'll give you two weeks, take it or leave it.' he would have taken it. At that point we had not heard from anyone else and they waited until there were 3 or 4 very good competing offers to react. 'Hey, we're going to lose her if we don't do anything.' At that point it's very hard to convince my husband, and say 'turn down top Ivy league universities and just make less money here, and be in a lower ranked department.' At that point there was nothing that I could do.

Another notes that more action and flexibility and less talk is needed.

> I think maybe more awareness that there, most families work and there are usually two people with jobs in each family now. And that people try to combine family life and work. It think there's a lot of lip service to that. But I really don't think that the institution is very flexible to that kind of thing. Like joint jobs . . . . I wouldn't think that would be a major, major thing to pay more than lip service to that.

However, another untenured informant found just that kind of flexibility in her XU unit with which she continues to communicate and to which she may eventually return.

> There is actually a lot of positive stuff that I see at X University that is different from other places. One of which is they have really been bending over backward to figure out ways to keep me affiliated so that if there is any chance that I'll come back I will. ....
>
> ...Well, what I think is really great is to rethink what an affiliation means ... I have never heard of anything as open and flexible as the school is [doing for me]. I think that they are really sort of acknowledging how hard it is to retain women... and that careers don't necessarily take place in a linear kind of straight line predictable fashion, that the whole tenure system is not designed for careers that have stops and starts and abrupt changes. [There need to] be structures in place that enable some flexibility in the system to accommodate the non-linear paths that a lot of people, and particularly women, have to go through because of other demands in their life. And I think there is nothing as rigid as the academic institution and to the extent that that rigidity can be sort of softened I... And experiments can be tried. ... I tell people what X University is allowing me to do... I told my colleagues at my new university and they just can't even believe it.

It was not only difficulty in finding adequate jobs for spouses that inhibited the retention of the women in this study. A few also talked of experiences where the chairs in their units made ungrounded assumptions about them because of their spousal situation. One informant told us that her chairperson assumed that she would automatically take her outside job offer to move near her husband in another state. Therefore, the chairperson did not make her a counter offer. She notes that she had already been in a commuting relationship with her husband for some time and would have liked to have had the option to stay at X University. She left however because she did not wish to deal with this type of treatment by her chairperson any longer. Another woman reports a similar situation where her department "didn't lift a finger to keep me" because of her change in marital status.

Dependent care issues

Caring for children was an important issue to a number of our untenured informants. Their views on the impact of children on their experience at the XU and their persistence varied. One woman noted that she actually missed the flexibility she

had working in academe compared to industry. Others had few problems though even some of these informants noticed the difficulties experienced by other women with children. One informant found XU's policy of extending the tenure clock one year for the birth of a child, university affiliated day care facilities and her live-in nanny made having two children relatively problem-free. Yet she noted that while a former unit chair was very supportive of her taking time to deal with family issues, her new chair was not accommodating.

> Now when he became the unit chair and he put a key meeting early on Wednesday mornings I stopped going. And I filled out a survey that said I'm not going because I stay home until the kids go to school in the morning. And he recognized that and he just doesn't care. I mean, he put that meeting at a time when people with kids really can't go.

Other informants had serious problems as they tried to care for children and pursue a faculty career. One informant found she was not supported when she tried to spend some time as a part-time faculty member in order to care for her children. While working 'part-time' she actually put in the same number of hours, for half the pay but had some flexibility in setting her schedule.

> Actually one of the reasons why I said that I would have quit (even) if I had not found a better job elsewhere is that our department was working towards mandating that they would be rid of all part-time faculty. They were not allowing--there was just a big study published, saying part-time positions were an absolute necessity for women having small children to be able to encourage them in an academic career. They said that part-time faculty were costing them too much money which I couldn't see since they were getting full days, you know, a full load of work out of me for half price.

Fit of interests with University values

The mission and the values held throughout X University at times differed from those of our informants--influencing their decisions to depart. This mismatch was most common among the untenured informants with whom we spoke. Nonetheless, two of our tenured informants also noted their concerns about some of the XU's values related to research and teaching and/or practice priorities. One of our tenured informants left due to this mismatch. She left X University because she wanted

> a real active and pretty positive tension between research and practice and that was a creative sort of tension that was missing at X University. That is a big reason.

Some of our untenured informants discovered that they were simply less interested in conducting basic research and publishing in general. Their interest rested more with professional practice, teaching or service. One informant told us how unfairly underrated her teaching was despite her very heavy load that included individual supervision of students. Another noted

> I found X University for me was not a good fit. And that's not a negative statement necessarily about the University. I have other negative statements, but that's not it. The University is obviously a research university and I had gone there having always worked in comprehensive universities. I wanted to try out a research university and found that it was just not a good fit for me. The focus on research, sort of above and beyond everything else, was just too, it just didn't fit. It was too far an extreme position for what my preference is.
>
> ... I liked a better mix of research, teaching, and other kinds of service activities. Let me just give you an example .... [gives example of a successful applied research center she established]. The university never acknowledged that. Never rewarded it. Never funded it. I mean, it was all done just sort of off our backs.

Other reasons

Using terms voiced by one of our informants, most of these faculty talked mostly about the 'push' within the environment of X University that convinced them to leave, rather than the 'pull' that attracted them to a new location. We conducted this study with the goal of learning why our informants left with the secondary hope of learning about the work environment at the University. With our goal shaping how we asked questions, this attention to the environment of X University is what we expected. Each of our respondents told us about conditions at X University that they saw as less than perfect and which made it less attractive for them to work there. Yet two of our tenured respondents differed from the others in their stories. They spoke more about moving to a new position for reasons beyond the control of X University. One gave her main reason as wishing to live in a country other than the U.S. The other noted her main reason as wanting to stay 'fresh' in her scholarship with new surroundings and colleagues. Both of these informants appear to be in more of a 'pull' situation where reason they left had more to do with their new employer than their former. Their stories testify to the diversity of reasons that faculty leave.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO WOMEN VOLUNTARILY LEAVING

Our informants also told us how X University officially responded to them in their final days on the faculty. We asked informants what X University could have done to keep them from leaving once they received outside job offers. The comments of our tenured informants about their experiences dealing with their outside offers and trying to negotiate with the XU were particularly interesting. The reasons that made our informants want to leave X University were more often aggravated than assuaged by the University's reaction to these women's decisions to consider outside job offers.

Four of our tenured informants report that their unit did not make an effort to keep them at X University by advancing an appropriate counter-offer. For an informant who was dissatisfied with the support she received during her career, this lack of support continued to be exhibited when she told her unit she was leaving. Her unit chair made her a verbal counter-offer but

> ... he would not put it writing or go any further than to say, 'I will match and you will have to take my word for it but I promise you have my word that I will match it.' And I said, 'Well look. You are the guy who wouldn't support me during an earlier incident. So I can't... I would have to be pretty stupid to sit and believe that.'

Another tenured informant had to request it before her unit would make her a counter-offer. Then the lack of expediency in setting up the offer and the unit chairperson's inadequate communication with her, demonstrated to her that the lack of respect previously shown her was not going to improve enough for her to consider staying at X University .

A number of our tenured and untenured informants told us that at the point they decided to leave, nothing could have been done to keep them. Yet this is not because they did not try to stay at X University. One professor who left because she saw no opportunities for herself at X University, spoke with numerous other senior women at the University to try to figure out a way to advance and to stay.

> I really did not have, I did it for the possibility of what else could I do in terms of advancement or my career at X University. By speaking to some eminent women professors, by speaking to my chairman, and I really have a feeling that... well, I was actually told by people, 'If you don't like it here, you'll just have to leave.' And that was their only suggestion. And the thing that surprised me was that I made a conscious effort to see several of the very prominent women on the faculty, not only in my school ... to sort of, for my own information, to see whether that's really what I should do. Or was I missing some link or steps that I could use in career advancement at X University? And the answers were very clear from everyone. That that's the way things were, and that's the way they're going to be and I myself, and there was nothing I could do about it.

We were happy to hear one story where the department made many attempts to encourage one assistant professor to remain affiliated with X University. This informant remarked (as we report in the 'Dual career' section) how flexible her unit was and how willing to experiment.

FORMER FACULTY MEMBERS' RESPONSE TO THE UNIVERSITY

A university's reaction to the faculty that it loses also has impact after these faculty depart. The women from X University can continue to affect the University's fund raising, reputation, and ability to hire new faculty. For example, one of our informants notes

> [In my new position] I am called upon .... [to work with top national and international scholars and policy makers]. And nobody at the University has been one bit interested in me since I left. Which I think is the culminating criticism that I can give. .... And frankly, I don't give any money to the University and I think that there should be some way women can combine in this effort. The only money that I give to the University ever is for things that pertain to women. I will not give money to X University for any other purpose. And I wish more women would react like that.

A university's reputation and the advice shared among professional groups plays an important role in efforts to attract the best new scholars. We asked our informants what they would tell a candidate for a job at X University if asked to give advice. Their reactions ranged from negative to positive. For example, one informant would hesitate

to encourage a woman to move into her old department. She found the department to be intellectually excellent, but socially undesirable. Others would be complimentary, but one of these informants would add advice that career goals must match the institutional mission.

Other faculty members have already actively expressed their reservations to scholars thinking about faculty positions at X University. One informant told us what she has told colleagues who were recruited for a job in her former unit at the XU.

> I would tell them the truth. Which is why they were unable to fill my position after I left. And which is why they, they were also looking for a new administrator in my area .... They were trying to recruit one of the famous people in my area from around the country ... And what the people at X University didn't realize is that the people they were interested in talking to all know me very well. They came and asked me what were the problems and why did I leave. And I told them and my old department, after a year of everybody giving it a very brief glimpse and not looking very hard at it--you know, a brief glance, maybe one trip--they ended up with an internal candidate, because nobody else would come, after the years of problems I had described. So nobody I knew on a national basis wanted to come.

One informant made the observation that while she wouldn't want to undermine the efforts to rebuild her former program, she would be honest with friends offered a position in her former unit and tell them about the problems that caused her to leave. Another informant talked of the women post-doctoral fellows in her former unit, indicating that her experiences there had a negative impact on them--none of them stayed on faculty at X University. Yet despite unsatisfactory experiences at X University, she would offer a more neutral and positive view of the University, echoed by another informant.

> ... I am not going to comment about the difficulties women have when they go there to another woman because I think that is something that you personally have to work out yourself. And that it also can't be generalized. University-wide there may be a certain policy, but within little areas it is going to be better or worse depending on the quality of your male colleagues. So for example, if the department chairman changes the whole view is going to change.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

We hope this research will contribute to fostering greater understanding of the experiences of women faculty. Yet fostering understanding is only a first step; changes in policy and practice are critical. As one of our informants commented:

> [I]n my five years at X University I saw a number of excellent reports generated on a variety of issues and never attended to internally. I can't argue that X University, like any school, has a responsibility to higher ed generally. I would like to see some of what X Un versity learns used for X University's' benefit.

We have made specific policy recommendations based on our findings to X University. Yet we also address our recommendations to the larger higher education community.

- **University administrators, especially chairpersons and deans need to be held accountable for fostering a climate of respect for all faculty.**

Our informants' stories note that disrespect while at times blatant can also be very covert. How can administrators help shape these interactions between people? We recognize that it is not an easy task. Yet, we know of a number of actions that can be taken. The first step is for administrators to pay attention to this issue, placing on it the importance that it deserves. In addition, assessment by a third party on a regular basis, can provide university and department leaders with the information they need to shape the climate. Current assessment programs (i.e. departmental reviews, annual reviews of administrators) need to include the fostering of respect as a criteria of success. New assessment opportunities (i.e., studies of the work place climate for faculty) need to be developed and supported. Both formal and informal accountability are key. Colleagues must be willing to speak up and be supported when they say to offensive peers, 'this is not acceptable around here.' Those appointing administrators should consider candidates' records of fostering climates where all faculty succeed, especially women of all races/ethnicities and men of color. Management training for all new deans and department heads can also be a means to help leaders improve the climate for all faculty.

- **Exit interviews of both women who voluntarily leave and all those denied tenure should be conducted regularly.**

In this study, we show that exit interviews conducted by a third-party interviewer can be successfully conducted. Providing assurance that the informants' identity will be held in confidence is the essential ingredient in the success of these interviews. We found almost no resistance to cooperating with these interviews. One informant even commented that, at the time she left X University, she wondered why they did not conduct exit interviews: "a standard practice in industry to track personnel attitudes and needs."

- **Universities need to address the concerns of their women faculty who name lack of opportunity and support as a major deterrents to their persistence, especially in light of the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions in universities.**

Universities will be well served to facilitate those who wish to contribute and grow in their service to their institutions and fields. Career paths and personal and financial support must be available equitably for women faculty. University leadership should assess these issues for their units and take action when needed. With regard to untenured faculty, information is a critical resource that must be provided to facilitate their success and persistence. For example, clear feedback documenting their progress towards tenure should be provided to them on a regular basis. Junior faculty should not be voluntarily leaving the University based on hearsay and gossip regarding what it will take for them to make tenure.

- **Universities and their schools and colleges should look carefully at how they approach negotiations with women faculty who have job offers from other institutions.**

Here again, accountability is the key: department chairpersons need to be held accountable for their actions or inaction in these negotiations. These negotiations help to shape the strength and composition of the University faculty. Institutions need to establish procedures that help assure gender equity in negotiations.

- **Make changes to the spousal employment assistance programs at universities using the suggestions of those for whom they failed.**

Our informants made suggestions on how to improve these programs--for example, using more aggressive follow-ups with spouses, introducing spouses to faculty in their fields who may have professional contacts to help in the job hunt and funding the hiring of spouses who seek faculty positions. The solution to the problems of those dealing with dual career issues rests at both the unit level and with higher administration support. Unit administrators need to recognize the importance of dual career issues and take quicker and decisive action to address these issues. For example, many situations that lead to the departure of dual career faculty never reach the attention of central administrators with the resources and skills to assist. Timing is critical in these cases. When departments 'drag their feet' on addressing these situations they may unnecessarily lose good faculty.

- **Salary equity should be reviewed on a regular basis.**

Our informants described examples of inequities and dissatisfaction with salary. Too often our informants told us that the inequities in salary were acknowledged by administrators who did nothing to fix them. The admission of gender inequitable salaries but lack of remedy is not only inappropriate but places a university in legal jeopardy.

- **The avenues available to women faculty who wish to report gender discrimination must be more widely visible and freed from the backlash and inaction that our informants report.**

A number of our informants experienced gender discrimination and noted that the responses they received from X University when reporting discriminatory incidents was inadequate and sometimes punitive. Administrators with specific responsibilities for dealing with gender issues should identified in all schools and colleges. In those places where such positions already exist, faculty need to be better informed as to the existence of these sources of assistance.

In sum, we recommend that universities attend to the issues important to women faculty. With so few women, especially in tenured positions, even the loss and discouragement of a few can have grave impact on departments (who could be left with no women on the faculty), younger faculty (who often lose experienced women faculty who could serve as potential mentors and role models), and students (who often interact with very few women professors in their college years). A solution is not to be found in a continual hiring process in which women enter in one side of a revolving door and then exit out the other side. Universities need to foster the satisfaction as well as the productivity of their tenured and untenured women faculty.

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